

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR  
THE DISTRICT OF MARYLAND

Jessica R. Steele

Plaintiff,

v.

SAILING VESSEL "POLARIS", Official Number  
631121, IMO# RSL44017M8, laying in her slip at 900  
Swan Creek Road, Ft. Washington, MD 20744, and her  
engines, tackle, equipment, furniture, and all other  
necessaries thereunto appertaining and belonging, in  
rem;

Defendant *in rem*.

Mark William Steele,  
1020 Accolawn Drive.  
Fort Washington, Md 20744;

Defendant *in personam*

\* \* \* \* \*

**VERIFIED COMPLAINT**

Plaintiff Jessica R. Steele brings this action pursuant to Supplemental Admiralty and  
Maritime Rule D, *in rem* against the Sailing Vessel "POLARIS" ("the Vessel"), and states  
as follows:

FILED  
U.S. DISTRICT COURT  
DISTRICT OF MARYLAND

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Civil Action No.   
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BY   
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16301 Accolawn Rd.  
Accokeek, MD 20607  
16JH 19 CV 3314

### **Summary of Action**

1. This is a possessory action *in rem*, brought pursuant to Supplemental Admiralty Rules C and D, to arrest a sailboat currently lying in Maryland waters and to sort out who holds title to the Vessel. Plaintiff Jessica Steele respectfully requests this Court issue process to arrest the Vessel pursuant to Supplemental Admiralty Rules C and D, and to keep the Vessel *in custodia legis* during the pendency of this litigation.

### **Jurisdiction and Venue**

2. This is an action within this Court's admiralty jurisdiction pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1333, Supplemental Rule D for Certain Admiralty and Maritime Claims, and Fed. R. Civ. P. 9(h).
3. Venue is proper in this Court as the Vessel which is the subject of this litigation, is currently located at the Tantallon Marina, 900 Swan Creek Road, Fort Washington, MD, within the Federal Judicial District of Maryland.

### **Parties**

4. Plaintiff Jessica Steele is a resident of the District of Columbia, who holds a Captain's license, USCG master to 100gt.
5. The particulars of the Vessel which is the subject of this litigation are as follows:
  - a. Name on Hull: "Polaris"
  - b. Model: Frers F&C Ketch Sailboat
  - c. Year: 1980
  - d. Length Overall: 44 Feet
  - e. USCG Official Number: 631121

### Facts

6. On May 17, 2016 Jessica Steele together with Mark Steele purchased the Vessel, defendant *in rem*, as joint tenants with survivorship. See Exhibit 1.
7. The Vessel has been docked since purchase at the Tantallon Marina in Fort Washington, Md.
8. The Vessel has the preferred 2-stateroom/2-head layout for chartering business.
9. On October 18, 2018 the two owners entered into a legally binding agreement which states that the Vessel is jointly owned and will be sold in an arm's length sale. See Exhibit 2.
10. On July 11, 2019, the United States Coast Guard's National Vessel Documentation Center received an application, USCG Form 1258, requesting to transfer ownership of the Vessel to Alyssa Tantallon, LLC.
11. Alyssa Tantallon, LLC is solely owned by Samuel Michael Todd, the owner of Tantallon Marina.
12. The application for transfer of ownership is signed by both Mr. Todd and Mr. Steele.
13. Only one co-owner's signature is present on the application and that is Mark Steele's signature which includes the words, "on behalf of sellers".
14. Both Mr. Todd's and Mr. Steele's signatures appear immediately above the Coast Guard statement that penalties for false statements include Civil, Monetary, Vessel Forfeiture, and/or Imprisonment (18 USC 1001).

**Count I**  
**Rule D Possessory Action**

15. Plaintiff Jessica Steele realleges the above paragraphs of the Verified Complaint as if fully set forth herein.
16. Supplementary Admiralty Rule D (Possessory, Petitory, and Partition Actions”) provides as follows:

In all actions for possession, partition, and to try title maintainable according to the course of the admiralty practice with respect to a vessel [...] the process shall be by a warrant of arrest of the vessel, cargo, or other property, and by notice in the manner provided by Rule B(2) to the adverse party or parties.

17. This Verified Complaint institutes an action to recover possession of the Vessel.
18. Jessica Steele has a bona fide claim of ownership to the Vessel.
19. Until such time as the Vessel is lawfully sold, with the authorization and signatures of both owners, Jessica Steele retains her ownership in the Vessel.
20. Until such time as the Vessel is lawfully sold, Jessica Steele has full rights to easy and ready access to the Vessel without denial on any grounds.

**Count II**  
**Rule D Petitory Action to Try Title**

21. Plaintiff Jessica Steele, realleges the above paragraphs of the Verified Complaint as if fully set forth herein.
22. Supplementary Admiralty Rule D (Possessory, Petitory, and Partition Actions”) provides as follows:

In all actions for possession, partition, and to try title maintainable according to the course of the admiralty practice with respect to a vessel [...] the process shall be by a warrant of arrest of the vessel, cargo, or other property, and by notice in the manner provided by Rule B(2) to the adverse party or parties.

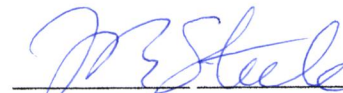
23. This Verified Complaint institutes an action to try title to the Vessel.
24. Ms. Steele has a bona fide claim of ownership to the Vessel.
25. Mr. Todd has alleged a competing claim of title to the Vessel. Mr. Todd has taken actions adverse to Ms. Steele's ownership interest in the Vessel, namely by (1) filing for a Coast Guard Certificate of Documentation for the Vessel, and (2) by making the Vessel unavailable for Ms. Steele's access and use.
26. Ms. Steele alleges that she is a true co-owner of the Vessel, as verified by the Coast Guard Abstract of Title, and that she bears good title as against Mr. Todd, and all others.

WHEREFORE Plaintiff Jessica Steele prays:

- a) That a warrant for arrest, pursuant to Supplemental Admiralty Rules C and D, be issued immediately against the Vessel described above and her respective engines, tackle, equipment, furniture and all other necessities thereunto appertaining and belonging, and that all persons claiming any interest therein may be cited to appear and answer the matters aforesaid;
- b) That Plaintiff Jessica Steele be decreed to have good title to the Vessel and her respective engines, tackles, equipment, furniture and all other necessities thereunto appertaining and belonging; as against Alyssa Tantallon, LLC, Samuel Michael Todd, and all others.
- c) That Plaintiff Jessica Steele be decreed to have full rights to easy and ready access to the Vessel without denial on any grounds.

- d) That this Court make a determination under Supplemental Admiralty Rule D of the respective ownership interests of all interested parties. That such other and further relief be granted as this Court deems just and proper.

Respectfully Submitted this  
18th day of November, 2019



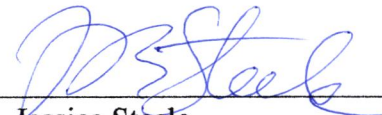
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jessica Steele, *pro se*  
3904 Edmunds St, NW,  
Washington, DC 20007  
(202) 486-2122

#### **VERIFICATION**

In the District of Columbia:

I am a party to this lawsuit, over 18 years old, and competent to make this affidavit. I verify under solemn affirmation that the facts alleged in the foregoing complaint are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and information

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, I  
solemnly declare under penalty of  
perjury that the foregoing is true  
and correct.



\_\_\_\_\_  
Jessica Steele

#### **List of Exhibits**

- Exhibit 1: Abstract of Title Continuation Sheet 2, Bill of Sale  
Exhibit 2: Findings of Fact, page 3 (agreement incorporated)